

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EURE-00 PM-04 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 L-03
CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 PA-01 USIA-06 PRS-01
EB-07 COME-00 TRSE-00 /064 W
-----141805Z 045580 /53

P 132140Z JAN 77
FM AMCONSUL QUEBEC
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 858
INFO AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY
AMCONSUL MONTREAL PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PFOR,CA,FR
SUBJECT: VISIT OF FRENCH FOREIGN TRADE MINISTER
ANDRE ROSSI

1. FRENCH FOREIGN TRADE MINISTER ANDRE ROSSI HAS COMPLETED A 48 HOUR VISIT TO QUEBEC CITY. HE MET WITH PREMIER LEVESQUE AND FIVE OTHER GOQ MINISTERS. ROSSI STRESSED THAT HIS TALKS WERE LIMITED TO "INDUSTRIAL QUESTIONS." HE ANNOUNCED IN A JOINT PRESS CONFERENCE WITH QUEBEC MINISTER FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT BERNARD LAUNDRY THE FIRM INTENTION OF THEIR GOVERNMENTS TO TAKE MEASURES TO ENCOURAGE A "TRUE FLOURISHING" OF INDUSTRIAL AND COMMERCIAL COOPERATION. THESE MEASURES WILL BEGIN WITH AN EXCHANGE OF VISITS BY ENTREPRENEURS AND TECHNICIONS BETWEEN TWO AND WILL CONCENTRATE ON AREAS OF MINING, AGRICULTURE, FORESTS AND ENERGY.

2. ROSSI DISCRETELY TURNED AWAY QUESTIONS ON THE POLITICAL DIMENSIONS OF FRENCH-QUEBECOIS COOPERATION. IN REPLY TO INSISTENT QUESTIONS OF JOURNALISTS, ROSSI STRESSED FRANCE'S DESIRE NOT TO INTERFERE IN CANADA'S NATIONAL AFFAIRS. HE SAID THAT

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DESPITE THE FACT THAT QUEBEC IS MAINLY FRENCH-SPEAKING AND GOVERNED BY A SEPARATIST PARTY, IT WILL NOT BE TREATED AS A SOVEREIGN STATE BY FRANCE. ROSSI SAID HIS COUNTRY WILL CONTINUE TO HAVE RELATIONS WITH QUEBEC, BUT ONLY IN AREAS WHERE THE PROVINCE HAS JURISDICTION, AND ADDED THAT QUEBEC'S POLITICAL STATUS WAS NOT DISCUSSED IN EARLIER MEETINGS IN OTTAWA WITH TRUDEAU AND INDUSTRY, TRADE AND COMMERCE MINISTER JEAN CHRETIEN.

3. PREMIER LEVESQUE TOLD JOURNALISTS YESTERDAY THAT ROSSI HAD DELIVERED LETTER FROM PRESIDENT BISCARD D ESTAINING WHICH WAS "WARM, ENCOURAGING, AND VERY DIPLOMATICALLY PHRASED." LEVESQUE SAID THAT HE HAD NOT ASKED GOF TO ASSIST QUEBEC IN ATTAINING POLITICAL SOVEREIGNTY BUT AFFIRMED THAT, IF SOVEREIGNTY COMES, HE WOULD EXPECT AN "UNDERSTANDING SYMPATHY" FROM FRANCOPHONE COUNTRIES WITH FRANCE IN THE LEAD. LEVESQUE'S OBSERVATIONS WERE MORE SUBDUED THAN REMARKS MADE TUESDAY BY QUEBEC'S OUTSPOKEN MINISTER OF INDUSTRY AND COMMERCE RODRIQUE TREMBLAY IN A DINNER TOAST TO ROSSI.

4. TREMBLAY SAID THAT GREATER ECONOMIC RELATIONS WITH FRANCE WOULD ENCOURAGE QUEBEC'S BREAK FROM THE "POLITICAL TRUSTEESHIP" OF THE CANADIAN CONFEDERATION. HE DESCRIBED ROSSI'S VISIT AS A "RENEWAL OF ECONOMIC SOLIDARITY BETWEEN FRANCE AND QUEBEC," ADDING THAT FRANCE IS THE COUNTRY WITH WHICH QUEBEC NATURALLY HAS THE GREATEST HISTORICAL, CULTURAL AND POLITICAL AFFINITIES. HE CONTINUED THAT QUEBEC WAS COUNTRING ON FRANCE TO HELP IT ATTAIN ITS NATURAL DESTINY AS COMMERCIAL INTERMEDIARIES BETWEEN EUROPE AND NORTH AMERICA. CITING FRANCE AS A PRECIOUS EXAMPLE FOR QUEBEC IN RECONCILING ECONOMIC PROGRESS AND THE DESIRE TO BE ONE'S SELF, TREMBLAY SAID THAT FRANCE AND EEC HAVE SHOWN THAT IT WAS POSSIBLE TO HAVE ECONOMIC INTERDEPENDENCE WITHOUT FALLING INTO "SWAMP" OF POLITICAL DEPENDENCE. TREMBLAY NOTED IN HIS TOAST THAT QUEBEC WOULD BE THE SEVENTH BIGGEST COUNTRY OUT OF 146, THAT ITS GNP OF \$40 BILLION RANKED 23RD IN WORLD AND PERSONAL PER CAPITA INCOME 11TH. HE CONCLUDED THAT QUEBEC IS AN ECONOMIC POWER WITHOUT KNOWING IT, MAINLY LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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BECAUSE IT IS A COUNTRY STILL UNDER POLITICAL TRUSTEESHIP WHICH DOES NOT YET CONTROL ITS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT. THE MINISTER TOLD HIS GUEST THAT QUEBEC WAS NO LONGER ON THE PASSIVE DEFENSE AND WILL RESIST THE EXTERNAL AND INTERNATIONAL FORCES FOR WHICH THE DEPENDENCE OF QUEBEC HAS BEEN HISTORICALLY VERY PROFITABLE.

5. COMMENT: ROSSI WAS IN CANADA TO ATTEND MEETINGS OF THE FRANCE-CANADA ECONOMIC COMMISSION HELD IN OTTAWA. HIS VISIT TO QUEBEC - A QUITE NORMAL PROCEDURE FOR FRENCH OFFICIALS COMING TO CANADA- WAS ARRANGED BEFORE THE NOVEMBER 15 ELECTION. HOWEVER, HE PROLONGED IT FROM 24 TO 48 HOURS AT THE REQUEST OF GOQ WHICH WOULD LIKE TO GIVE SOME POLITICAL COLORING TO EXISTING COOPERATION BETWEEN PARIS AND QUEBEC. THE PROLONGATION OF HIS VISIT, THE FIRST BY GOF MINISTER SINCE PQ VICTORY, STIRRED THE IMAGINATION OF LOCAL JOURNALISTS. TREMBLAY'S REMARKS NO DOUBT HEIGHTENED SPECULATION ON THE REAL NATURE OF QUEBEC-FRANCE RELATIONS ALTHOUGH IT WAS WIDELY NOTED THAT TREMBLAY HAD ALREADY EMBARRASSED PQ GOVERNMENT SEVERAL TIMES WITH HIS

OUTSPOKEN REMARKS. LEVESQUE'S COMCISE REMARKS ARE MORE IN LINE WITH
OUR UNDERSTANDING OF PQ'S REALISTIC VIEWS ON RELATIONS WITH FRANCE.
NONETHELESS, GIVEN THE EMOTIONAL NATURE OF QUEBECERS TIES WITH
FRANCE, ONE CAN EXPECT MORE GOQ MINISTERS TO EXAGERRATE FRANCE'S
ROLE IN QUEBEC- AS TREMBLAY DID - WHEN THEIR GOF COUNTERPARTS
ARE IN TOWN.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: ECONOMIC COOPERATION, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, MINISTERIAL VISITS, PRESS CONFERENCES, PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 13-Jan-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977QUEBEC00015
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770015-0017
Format: TEL
From: QUEBEC
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770155/aaaabvwm.tel
Line Count: 124
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 821005da-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 20-Dec-2004 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3606347
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: VISIT OF FRENCH FOREIGN TRADE MINISTER ANDRE ROSSI
TAGS: PFOR, CA, FR, (ROSSI, ANDRE), (LEVESQUE, RENE), (LAUNDRY, BERNARD)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/821005da-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009